

PROBLEMS OF IMMIGRATION

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No question of public policy is of greater importance or affects so closely the interests of the people of this country for the time present and to come as that of immigration. It presents both a practical and a sentimental side. It cannot be dealt with as other public issues. It does not deal with the question of revenue. Its subjects are not inanimate like merchandise; they are human beings. They have aspirations, hopes, fears and frailties. The methods by which other laws are administered cannot, with regard to such a subject, be resorted to in the enforcement of the immigration laws. These laws, be it remembered, with one exception, are not laws of exclusion, but laws of selection. They do not shut out the able-bodied, law-abiding and thrifty alien who seeks to make a home among us, and to help at once his individual condition and the welfare of his adopted country. To such it is the part both of policy and good government, as well as of justice and fair play, to extend the hand of welcome. But it has long since been learned in the school of practical experience that the universal welcome which should be extended by a free people to those of oppressed nations, should be restrained by considerations of prudence and a regard for the safety and well-being of the country itself. Hence it has become an established principle of this Government to frown upon the efforts of foreign countries and of interested individuals and corporations to bring to the United States, to become burdens thereupon, the indigent, the morally depraved, the physically and mentally diseased, the shiftless, and all those who are induced to leave their own country, not by their own independent volition and their own natural ambition to seek a larger and more promising field of individual enterprise, but by some selfish scheme, devised either to take undue advantage of some classes of our own people, or for other improper purpose. That such a policy is a wise one, as well as obligatory upon the Govern-

largely of Teutonic stock, with a large percentage of Celtic. Fifteen millions of them have made their homes with us. In fact, they have been the pathfinders in the West and Northwest. They are an intelligent, industrious and sturdy people. They have contributed largely to the development of our country and its resources, and to them is due, in a great measure, the high standard of American citizenship.

The character of our immigration has now changed. During the past fifteen years we have been receiving a very undesirable class from Southern and Eastern Europe, which has taken the place of the Teutons and Celts. During the past fiscal year nearly 600,000 of these have been landed on our shores, constituting nearly 70 per cent. of the entire immigration for that year. Instead of going to those sections where there is a sore need for farm labor, they congregate in the larger cities mostly along the Atlantic seaboard, where they constitute a dangerous and unwholesome element of our population.

About 50 per cent. of the 196,000 aliens who came from Southern Italy during the past year were unable to read or write any language, and the rate of illiteracy among the rest of these Mediterranean and Slavic immigrants ranges from 20 per cent. to 70 per cent., while among the Teutonic and Celtic races the rate of illiteracy is less than 1 per cent. to 4 per cent. This change which has taken place during the past fifteen years has resulted in raising the average of illiteracy of all aliens from about 5 per cent. in former years to 25 per cent. at the present time.

What I desire, however, to call attention to, I have already indicated, and that is that in the enforcement of the immigration laws, since the subjects thereof are human beings, the treatment is two-sided. One-half of the work incumbent upon the Government has been done when those whose presence would militate against the interests of the people of this country have been detected and returned to their homes. Under the direction of the Bureau of Immigration all aliens are carefully examined by immigrant inspectors and surgeons of the Marine Hospital Service at the ports of entry for the purpose of rejecting those not admissible under the provisions of the immigration laws. During the past year more than 1 per cent. of those who applied for admission were rejected

medium of distributing the aliens is to my mind as much of a duty as it is to decide to whom the right to enter shall be given.

There are confined in the penal, reformatory and charitable institutions of the eleven States from Maine to Maryland, including Delaware, 28,135 aliens. The Irish, Slavs, Germans, Italians and English make up 85 per cent. of the total. There are 9,390 Irish; 5,372 Slavic; 4,426 Germans; 2,623 Italians, and 2,622 English. In the State of Pennsylvania there are 5,601 aliens confined in these institutions, 90 per cent. of whom are of the same five races in the following numbers: 1,772 Slavic; 1,218 Irish; 1,078 Germans; 673 Italians, and 423 English.

As I have already stated, the question has two sides. The other side is the humanitarian. It refers to the claims upon our consideration of alien arrivals as fellow beings. This side equally demands of a just and humane government the adoption of practical methods for such a distribution of these people as I have already indicated. On their own account, and in consideration of their ignorance and helplessness, they should be taken out of the great centers of population, where restricted space compels them to live together in a very unhealthful and unsanitary condition, and where competition for the means of existence forces them to prey upon each other and upon American citizens engaged in the same pursuits by a system of underbidding for work, a condition which reduces the cost of labor and lowers the standard of living. Such colonization, furthermore, by its consequent disregard of sanitary laws, threatens the physical health of the communities affected.

I cannot, in the brief space at my disposal, do more than merely advert to the principal features of this great governmental policy regulating immigration, a policy whose administration, to some extent, has been confided to my hands. I feel with every day of added experience the gravity of the interests involved, and that it calls for all that is best and highest in ability and moral stamina to accomplish the best results. It would be impossible for any right-minded man—it certainly has been to me—to undertake such a task without soon learning how much it exacts. In every moment of doubt or uncertainty, however, I have endeavored to be governed by that fundamental principle of our Government